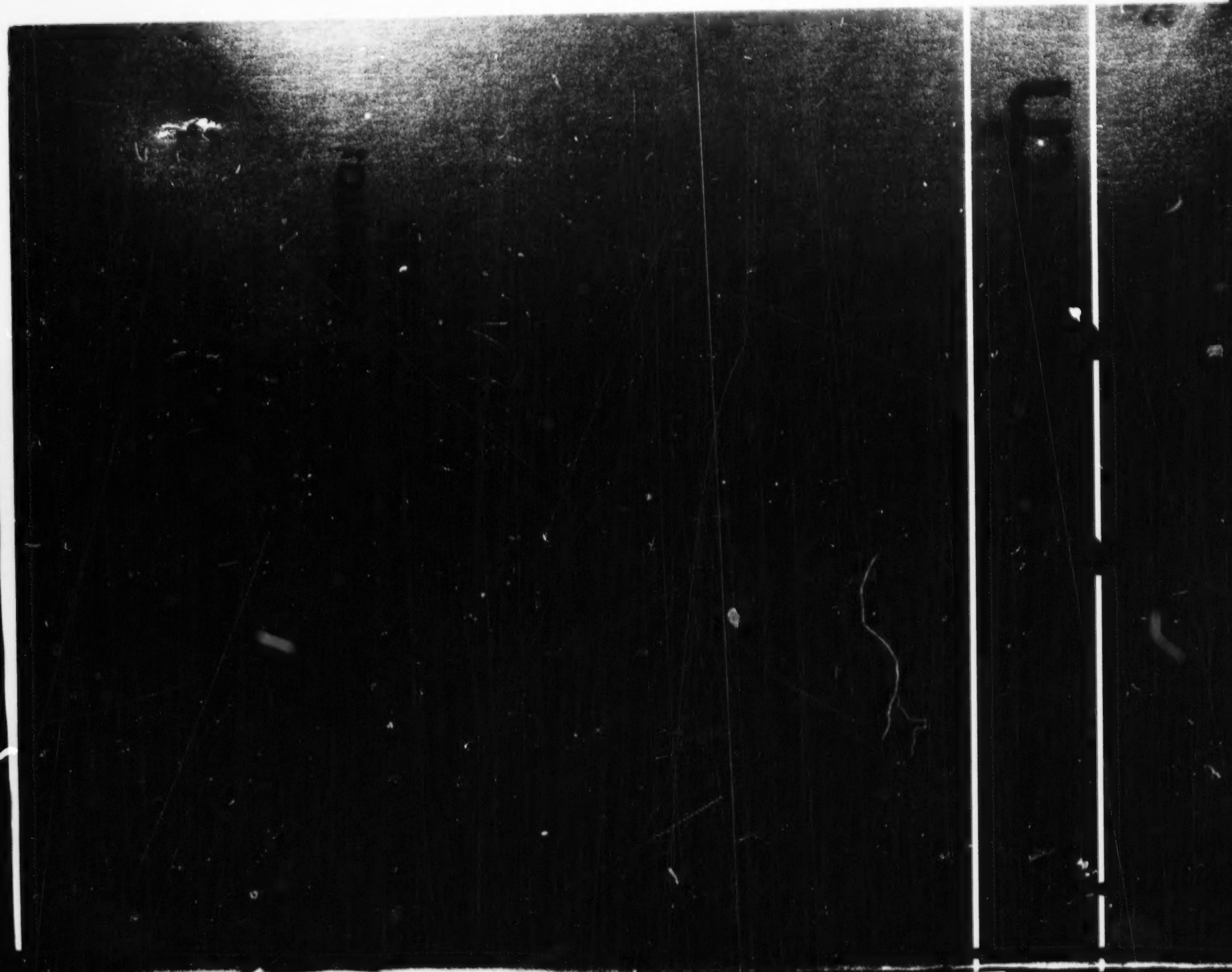

Alberta
EDUCATION

Devonian Building, West Tower, 11160 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 0L2

March, 1983

To the Reader:

Re: Community Schools in Alberta: A Comparative Analysis

This report comes to you from the Planning Services Branch of Alberta Education. It is available as a complete report and as a summary of a comparative study of designated community schools and a number of "non-designated" schools. Only a limited number of copies of the complete version have been printed. These have been distributed to Superintendents of schools, to Regional Offices of Education and various libraries in Alberta. Persons who have reviewed the summary version and who wish to see the complete report may obtain individual copies from Planning Services while quantities last; or they may be able to read a copy at one of the locations identified above. Photocopying is permitted.

We hope that these reports will prove to be interesting and useful to you.

Sincerely,

H.I. Hastings

H.I. Hastings
Director
Planning Services

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED DESIGNATED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AND NON-DESIGNATED SCHOOLS IN ALBERTA

A SYNOPSIS

BY
WALTER ANDREW LAZARUK, Ph. D.

A Study Conducted Under Contract to
Planning and Research Branch
Alberta Education
Edmonton, Alberta

December, 1982

82-29

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Introduction

The Government of Alberta announced its official Alberta Community School Programme Position in May, 1980. This government, through the Interdepartmental Community School Committee, endorses the community school concept and assists in local implementation and operation of such schools in Alberta. The primary purpose of endorsing the establishment and maintenance of community schools by the Government is to enable people to meet their educational, recreational, cultural, social, health and other needs within their own communities.

A school which has been designated a community school by the Interdepartmental Community School Committee is eligible for additional financial assistance. Ideally, a Designated Community School will exhibit all or most of these dimensions:[1]

1. The school curriculum is consciously oriented towards the community.
2. There is an effective involvement of parents and other community members.
3. A collegial atmosphere is encouraged and parents and other community people are regarded as allies.
4. Community members assist teachers in the classroom.
5. Educational activities for people of all ages are encouraged by school personnel.
6. School staff and students are active in interagency cooperative activities.
7. School and community facilities are adapted for community education purposes.
8. School facilities are open for community use.

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[1] Alberta Community School Programme Position, A Synopsis, Interdepartmental Community School Committee, 1981, p.1.

9. School staff encourage students to study community issues and problems.

10. A vital goal of school personnel and students is to foster a sense of community.

Need for Study

The Interdepartmental Community School Committee has major responsibility for recommending to the Deputy Ministers of Alberta Advanced Education and Manpower, Alberta Culture, Alberta Education and Alberta Recreation and Parks on the establishment, financing, functioning and modification of intra- and inter-departmental programs and initiatives related to the community school and community education programs and concepts. The Interdepartmental Community School Committee shall also carry out community school and community education activities on a coordinated interdepartmental basis. These include an information service, consultation service, inservice education, pre-service education and educational and community school building specifications. The mandates of the Interdepartmental Community School Committee (IDCSC) include, as well as, the regular monitoring and evaluation of Designated Community Schools (DCSs).

In order to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation functions, a need existed for baseline data which would provide the Interdepartmental Community School Committee with information or a point of reference on which judgments could eventually be made about the relative success of the Alberta Community School Programme Position. In addition, as more communities became interested in community schools, a need existed for a study that would further clarify the community education philosophy for both lay and professional publics. Moreover, a study was needed to provide information on the current

state of community school development in Alberta.

Statement of Problem

To provide this baseline information, the researcher proposed to conduct a comparative study of selected Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools on the ten characteristics of a community school which are defined in the Alberta Community School Programme Position. These are summarized as follows:

1. Community Related Curriculum
2. Involvement of Parents
3. Collegiality
4. Everyone a Teacher
5. Everyone a Learner
6. Interagency Cooperation
7. Facility Adaptation
8. Community Use
9. Community Issues
10. Sense of Community

Study Questions

Essentially, this exploratory study was intended to assist in answering these questions:

1. Are there differences between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the school curriculum?
2. Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent of parent and community member involvement?

3. Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent of staff, student and community participation in decision making?

4. Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the number and variety of additional programs offered to people of all ages?

5. Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the number of community adults and students who provide or assist with instruction?

6. Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent and method in which cooperation with community agencies is implemented?

7. Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the design and adaptation of school facilities for community use?

8. Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent to which school facilities are used by community groups?

9. Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent to which problems and issues of significance to the community are studied?

10. Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the attitude of students and teachers toward the community and of the community toward the school?

Procedures

The research study consisted of various steps. A sample of Designated Community Schools in Alberta was selected based on the major criteria that they had operated as community schools for at least three years and had implemented: (a) a community input or advisory group; (b) educational, recreational, social and cultural programs for children, youth and adults which extended beyond the traditional school day; and (c) at least a half-time leadership position for community education. Further, these community schools were representative of communities involved with community education in Alberta and were representative of the grade levels

and size of schools involved in the Alberta Community School Programme Position. Fifteen Designated Community Schools in Alberta met these criteria. Furthermore, these 15 Designated Community Schools were matched with Non-Designated Schools similar to the Designated Community Schools in grade level, size and location. All these schools were asked to participate in the questionnaire portion of this study.

Within each school, respondents selected to complete survey questionnaires included the principal, community school coordinator or persons occupying community school leadership positions where applicable; 20 percent of the teachers (minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20): 10 community members-at-large who had no children in the specific school; 5 agency representatives; and 20 students in the highest grade in the school (grade 6, grade 9 or grade 12). Over 68 percent of the respondents returned the survey questionnaires -- a total of 1,646 respondents.

For the on-site visitation portion of the study, four Designated Community Schools and four matched Non-Designated Schools were visited. Structured interviews were conducted with the principal, community school coordinator, five teachers, ten students, five parents, five community members-at-large and two agency representatives in each of these eight schools. A total of 206 people were interviewed in this study out of an anticipated number of 228 people, 91 percent of the number expected.

Survey questionnaires and structured interview questionnaires were developed on the basis of the definition and ten characteristics of a community school as outlined in the Alberta Community School Programme Position. Questionnaires and structured interview protocols were developed for the principals, community school coordinators, teachers, students,

parents, community members-at-large other than parents and inter-agency representatives.

The majority of the survey questionnaire items were analyzed by means of the t test for correlated means in order to determine whether the differences in means, or average scores, of the respondents within matched Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools were statistically significant. Statistical significance means that the observed phenomenon represents a significant departure from what might be expected by chance alone if the groups were in fact equivalent. The null hypothesis was that there was no difference between the mean ratings of respondents of Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools. A two-tailed non-directional test was applied and a significance level of .05 was accepted a priori as the level at which the null hypothesis would be rejected. In the majority of items of all respondents, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between mean scores of respondents of Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools was accepted. Further, correlation coefficients and chi-square tests were other statistical measures applied.

Study Limitations

For the benefit of readers in utilizing and fully understanding the study findings, the following are some of the limitations of the study:

1. The sample was limited to a survey of 15 Designated Community Schools in Alberta and 17 Non-Designated Community Schools in Alberta.

2. The Designated Community Schools selected for the study had formally only adopted the Alberta definition of Community Schools during the 1980-81 school year and historically may have operated with different emphases on the characteristics of a community school.

3. There were potential biases in the mail survey responses of Designated Community School respondents who were attempting to meet the expectations of the Alberta Community School Programme Position.

4. Traditional community expectations of and histories of some Designated Community Schools and matched Non-Designated Schools may have resulted in varying responses which may not necessarily relate to the study questions.

5. Only the Alberta Government definition of a community school was used in developing and adapting questionnaires and gathering information for this study.

6. The researcher assumed that the sampling procedures were conducted in each school according to instructions.

7. Much of the data were derived from respondents' perceptions. The researcher assumed that these perceptions were indicative of the respondents' true feelings.

Summary of the Findings

The following is a brief summary of the findings of this study in relation to the ten study questions.

Study Question 1

Are there differences between Designated Community Schools (DCSs) and Non-Designated Schools (NDSs) in the school curriculum?

The survey results revealed that a statistically significant difference existed between DCSs and NDSs in the respondent ratings of the school curriculum. DCSs used human resources more frequently to enhance the school curriculum. In addition, students of DCSs went into the community more frequently to use available facilities and resources. Furthermore, students of DCSs went into the community more often to provide community service while they learned. Likewise, DCSs placed more emphasis on the study of the local community. These results were confirmed by the interview information.

Study Question 2

Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent of parent and community involvement?

The survey revealed that a statistically significant difference in the results existed between DCSs and NDSs on various aspects of parent and community involvement. Parents and community members were more extensively involved in DCSs in providing advice on the school curriculum. Similarly, it appeared that DCSs involved community members other than parents to a greater extent in helping teachers through voluntary service. The results, however, did not indicate a significant difference between DSCs and NDSs in the extent to which parents were involved in helping teachers through voluntary service.

Study Question 3

Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent of staff, student and community participation in decision making?

DCSs and NDSs appeared to differ significantly only in the degree of parent and community involvement in providing advice on school curriculum. DCSs seemed to involve parents and community members more extensively in this regard. Findings did not indicate that DCSs and NDSs differed in the extent to which school boards encouraged teacher participation in school district decision making. Likewise, of the four response groups, only principals perceived that school administrations of DCSs encouraged teacher participation in school decision making more frequently than school administrations of NDSs.

Study Question 4

Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the number and variety of programs offered to people of all ages?

A significant difference was found between DCSs and NDSs in the extent to which these schools provided activities for people of all ages. DCSs offered more educational, recreational, cultural and social activities involving people of all ages.

Study Question 5

Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent to which community adults and students provide or assist with instruction.

A statistically significant difference was found between DCSs and NDSs in the extent to which community adults and students provided or assisted with instruction. It appeared that DCSs used community adults and students as resource personnel to a greater extent.

Study Question 6

Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent and method in which cooperation with community agencies is implemented?

A significant difference was found between DCSs and NDSs in the extent and method in which cooperation with community agencies was implemented. DCSs cooperated with community agencies to a greater extent in the provision of comprehensive educational, recreational, cultural and social services in the school attendance area. DCSs were also more extensively involved in community improvement projects. Methods of cooperation included advisory councils, joint planning, interagency communication, sharing of personnel and sharing of financial and physical resources.

Study Question 7

Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the design and adaptation of school facilities for community use?

The results appeared to indicate that DCSs and NDSs did not differ significantly in design, but did differ considerably in the adaptation of school facilities for community use. Designated Community Schools reported more modifications or adaptations of school facilities to enhance community use through such features as multi-use areas, kitchens, community rooms and community libraries.

Study Question 8

Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent to which school facilities are used by community groups?

The survey results indicated that DCSs and NDSs differed significantly in the extent to which the school facilities were used by community groups. DCSs were reported to be made available more often on an extended time basis daily and yearly.

Study Question 9

Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the extent to which problems and issues of significance to the community are studied?

DCSs and NDSs differed significantly in the extent to which problems and issues of significance to the community were studied. DCSs appeared to study local problems and issues more frequently than NDSs.

Study Question 10

Is there a difference between Designated Community Schools and Non-Designated Schools in the attitude of students and teachers toward the community and of the community toward the school?

The study revealed a significant difference between DCSs and NDSs in the importance accorded to community-related activities. The importance scales in the study indicated that respondents of DCSs assigned more importance to community-related activities. Survey results also indicated that DCSs organized activities to foster cooperative relations with the community more frequently and had established more effective communication with the community.

Correlation Results

Finally, correlation coefficients indicated that there was a significant relationship between DCS and NDS teacher and student responses in terms of community-related curriculum and involvement of parents and community members. Further, DCSs with smaller student enrollments seemed to involve parents and community members more than DCSs with larger student enrollments. Moreover, DCSs which began recently appeared to involve parents and community members more often and attached more importance to this involvement than did DCSs that had operated for a longer period of time.

Conclusions

Conclusions resulting from the analysis of data in this study were considered within the context of the major study findings.

1. Designated Community Schools in this study demonstrated a more conscious orientation to the community than Non-Designated Schools. Consistent with the community education philosophy, Designated Community Schools seemed to regard the community as a learning laboratory and used available human and physical resources to advantage. Similarly, greater

community involvement and increased cooperation with community agencies were valued.

2. The ten characteristics of a community school as defined in Alberta appeared to be developed in Designated Community Schools to a greater degree than in Non-Designated Schools. The use of human and physical resources, involvement of parents in curricular advice, programs for people of all ages, interagency cooperation, community use, and importance given to community-related activities were found to be the strongest elements. In need of further development were such dimensions as community-related curriculum, volunteer programs, teacher and student participation in decision making and the study of problems and issues of importance to the community.

3. The provision of additional leadership positions and financial support for Designated Community Schools may have accounted for the more substantive development of community-related dimensions included in the definition of a community school. The leadership positions for community education enabled Designated Community Schools to devote more time and effort to a comprehensive development of programs and processes relevant to a community school. The expansion of school functions beyond schooling in the traditional sense requires additional time and resources.

4. Broad-based participation in school related decision making requires clarification. It was unclear from the study what providing advice on the school curriculum by parents and community members meant. It would appear to be appropriate to delineate more clearly which decisions could be made at the local school level and the relationship of these decisions to school district and provincial decisions.

5. Parental and community involvement seemed to be more extensive in Designated Community Schools which are elementary schools. Study results appeared to indicate that Designated Community Schools with larger enrollments, which in this study were secondary schools, involved parents and community members to a lesser extent.

6. Designated Community schools which began operation recently seemed to be more enthusiastic about community involvement and community-related activities. High interest often accompanies a new innovation as indicated in the literature on educational change. It will be important to find ways to maintain this interest over the years.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following are recommended for review:

1. The definition of a community school and its role in community education should be more widely communicated to interested lay and professional publics in Alberta. Visitations to operating community schools, public forums, workshops and articles in local newspapers are a few of the communication means to consider.

2. Relevant training programs should be established in Alberta for leadership positions in community schools and in community education. With the community orientation of community schools, it seems important to provide leadership training in such areas as human relations skills, community involvement strategies, public relations, community-related curriculum, group processes and human resource management.

3. A clearer definition of community-related curriculum should be developed in the Province of Alberta. With the mandatory provincial program of studies occupying a central focus in schools, the role of a community-based curriculum and its relationship to the mandatory program requires further elaboration.

4. The development of volunteerism should be given more attention in Designated Community Schools. Volunteer tasks need to be defined and incentives need to be created. More emphasis, as well, should be placed on recruitment, selection, training and placement of volunteers. Not only could volunteerism be an effective way to integrate community resources into the classroom, but it can also provide parent and community members with additional skills, knowledge and job satisfaction.

5. The role and nature of school-based decision making should be more substantially defined. The role of parent and community advisory groups in a school setting requires clarification. The nature of decisions that could be better made at the school level as opposed to district and provincial levels should be reviewed.

6. A summative evaluation of the Alberta Community School Programme Position (ACSPP) should be conducted in approximately five years. One of the purposes of this exploratory study was to provide baseline data which could eventually be used to make judgments about the relative success of the ACSPP. A comprehensive evaluation of this program in five years would assist in determining its overall effectiveness.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on this research, it is recommended that further study be

conducted to answer the following questions:

1. Does a community-based or life-centred approach to curriculum make learning more meaningful for children?

2. What is the impact of parent and community member involvement on local decision making and local governance?

3. What is the impact of various leadership approaches in Designated Community Schools?

4. What are the effects of extensive use of community resource personnel and volunteers on teacher effectiveness and attitude?

5. How cost-effective are community schools as compared to non-community schools?

6. Is there a relationship between the level of citizen involvement in and knowledge about schools and the degree of support for schools?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For purposes of this study, the definitions are used as follows:

1. Community School is a school where, with the endorsement of the school board in cooperation with other local authorities and on behalf of the community, there is formal commitment to the use of the educational process for both individual and community betterment. There is also a formal commitment to consciously orient the school to the community it serves.

2. Community-Related Curriculum. Basic education is enhanced by relating the curriculum to real life situations in the community. Students go into the community to use available facilities and resources, and to provide service while they learn. In turn, community resources are brought into the school. Intense study of the local community becomes the basis for study of life in other communities and the world.

3. Involvement of Parents. There is an effective involvement of parents and other community members in helping to develop the curriculum of the school and in helping teachers through appropriate voluntary service.

4. Collegiality. A democratic, collegial philosophy is encouraged by the school board and principal teacher in the administration of the school. Parents and other interested community people are regarded as allies.

5. Everyone a Teacher. The faculty includes teachers, working in cooperation with each other, and community adults and students.

6. Everyone a Learner. Although the education of the young is the priority, all members of the community are potential students, including preschoolers and adults of all ages. Educational activities involving people of all ages are encouraged.

7. Inter-agency Cooperation. The school regards itself as an integral part of a total community education system. The school cooperates with other community organizations and agencies to provide comprehensive educational, recreational, cultural and social services to people in the school attendance area.

8. Facility Adaptation. School facilities may be designed or modified with effective teacher and community involvement so that, ideally, the entire structure is designed to facilitate community use as well as to accommodate community education activities.

9. Community Use. The school facility is available for community educational, recreational, cultural and social use on an extended time basis daily and yearly. Community activities might be scheduled at any time during each operational day.

10. Community Issues. The school, by policy, encourages a study of problems and issues of significance to the community, often in cooperation with other agencies and organizations in the community.

11. Sense of Community. The school has a vital stated goal, which is to foster a sense of community. It assumes it is important that the people who live in its attendance area know and care about each other.

Appendix B

PRINCIPAL QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL ITEMS:

1. School _____

2. How long have you been principal in your present school?
   (Count the present year as a complete year.) _____ Year(s)

3. In what year did this school become a community school (if applicable)? _____

The statements below describe the responsibilities and activities that a school might undertake as part of its educational role. RELATE THESE STATEMENTS TO YOUR SCHOOL IN ANSWERING EACH OF THE QUESTIONS.

Step 1: Circle the appropriate number(s) according to the scale provided below to indicate the number of times your school carries on each of the specified activities in a typical school year.

1 means Never
2 means Seldom (1-2 times per year)
3 means Occasionally (3-4 times per year)
4 means Often (5-8 times per year)
5 means Very Often (9 or more times per year)

Step 2: Rate the importance of each activity by circling the appropriate number.

Never	Seldom (1-2 per year)	Occasionally (3-4 per year)	Often (5-8 per year)	Very Often (9 or more per year)		Of No Importance	Of Limited Importance	Of Average Importance	Of Considerable Importance	Of Critical Importance
1	2	3	4	5	1. The school uses human community resources to enhance the school curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	2. Students go into the community to use available facilities and resources.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	3. Students go into the community to provide community service while they learn.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	4. The school emphasizes the study of the local community.	1	2	3	4	5

Never	Seldom (1-2 per year)	Occasionally (3-4 per year)	Often (5-8 per year)	Very Often (9 or more per year)		Of No Importance	Of Limited Importance	Of Average Importance	Of Considerable Importance	Of Critical Importance
1	2	3	4	5	5. The school involves parents in providing advice on the school curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	6. The school involves parents in helping teachers through voluntary service.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	7. The school involves community members other than parents in providing advice on the school curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	8. The school involves community members other than parents in helping teachers through voluntary service.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	9. The School Board encourages teacher participation in school district decision making.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	10. The administration of this school encourages teacher participation in school decision making.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	11. The school staff includes community adults as resource personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	12. The school staff includes students as resource personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	13. The school provides educational activities involving people of all ages.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	14. The school cooperates with other community organizations and agencies to provide comprehensive educational, recreational, cultural and social services in the school attendance area.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	15. The school encourages a study of problems and issues of importance to the community in the school curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5	16. The school organizes activities to foster cooperative relations with the community.	1	2	3	4	5

Never	Seldom (1-2 per year)	Occasionally (3-4 per year)	Often (5-8 per year)	Very Often (9 or more per year)
1	2	3	4	5

17. The school participates in community improvement projects.

Please check ✓

Yes ___ No ___ 18. The school facility is available for community use on an extended time basis daily and yearly.

Yes ___ No ___ 19. The school makes community members feel welcome at the school.

Yes ___ No ___ 20. The present school program has resulted in effective communication between the community and the school.

Of No Importance	Of Limited Importance	Of Average Importance	Of Considerable Importance	Of Critical Importance
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5
1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C

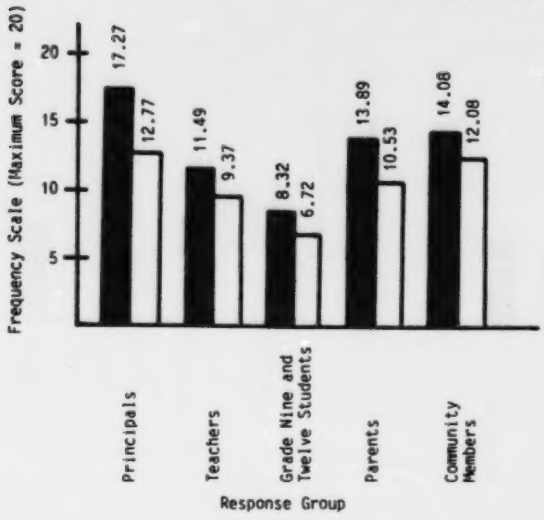


Figure IV-1

Mean Scores by Response Group on Community-Related Curriculum

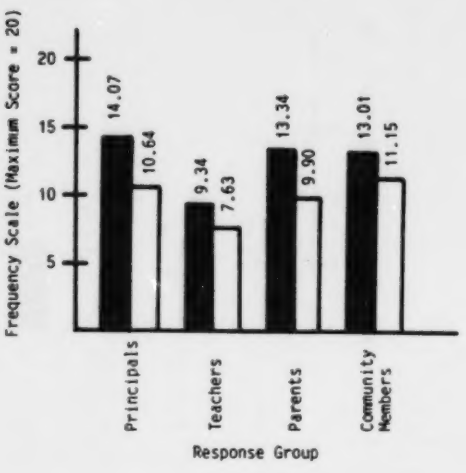


Figure IV-2

Mean Scores by Response Group on Involvement of Parents and Community Members

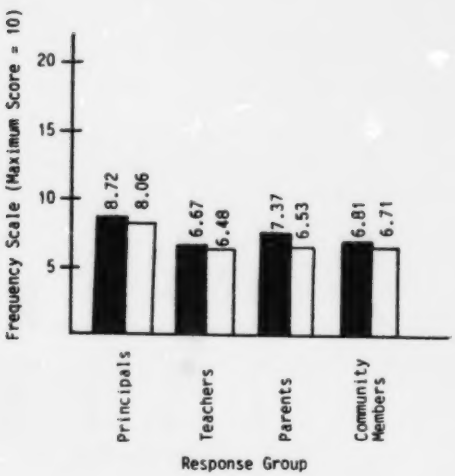


Figure IV-3

Mean Scores by Response Group on Collegiality

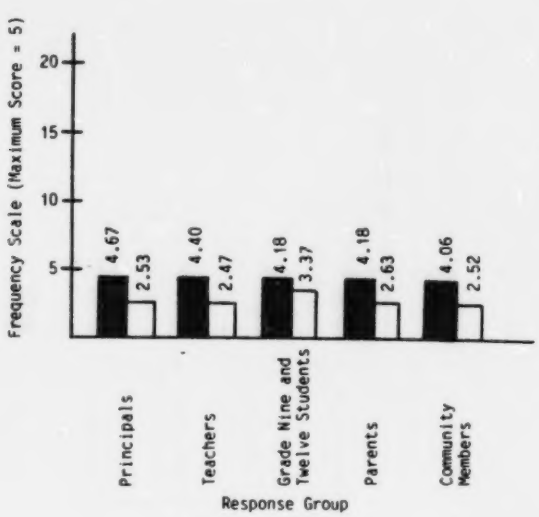
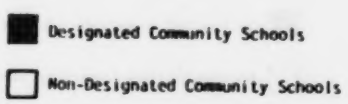


Figure IV-4

Mean Scores by Response Group on Programs for People of All Ages



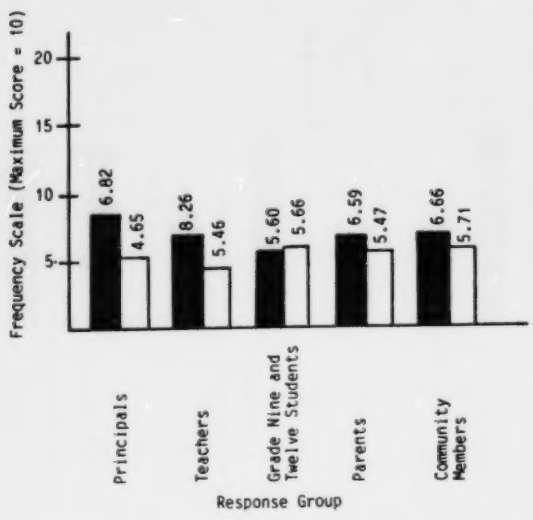


Figure IV-5

Mean Scores by Response Group Related to Adults and Students as Resource Personnel

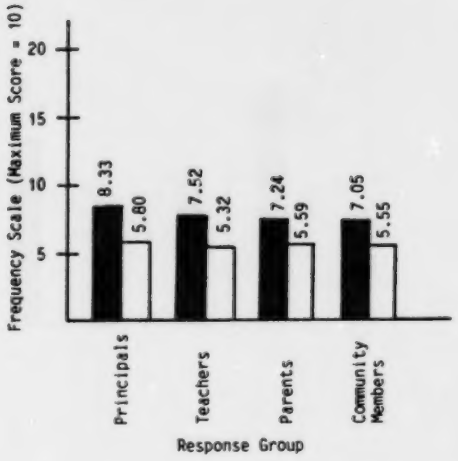


Figure IV-6

Mean Scores by Response Group on Inter-agency Cooperation

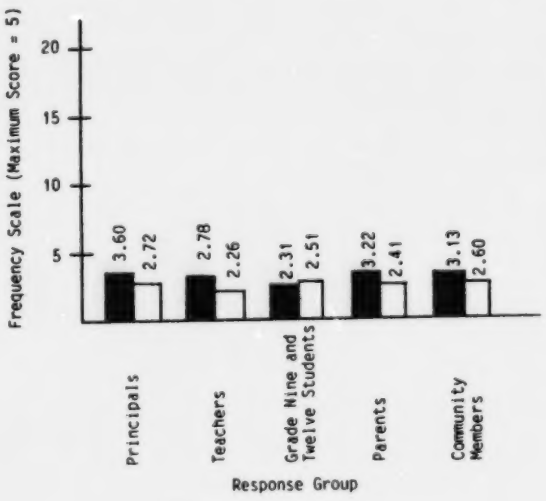


Figure IV-7

Mean Scores by Response Group on Community Issues

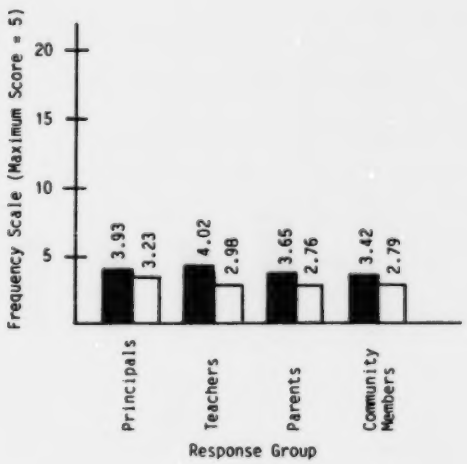


Figure IV-8

Mean Scores by Response Group on Sense of Community